

Agency of Human Services Barre District Annual Strategic Plan for 2007

Introduction to the 2007 Strategic Plan for the Barre District

We're pleased to share with you our 2007 Agency of Human Services Strategic Plan for the Barre District. We've outlined the priorities we hope to achieve this year in our effort to continue to transform the Agency of Human Services. The risk in any planning document is that something may be omitted or overlooked – this plan is meant to serve as a guide that will shape our strategic work during 2007, and, of course, we'll address issues and needs as they emerge.

Thanks to everyone who offered comments as to how and where we should focus our energy and resources in 2007. Feel free to continue to send comments to don.mandelkorn@ahs.state.vt.us or cindy.miller@ahs.state.vt.us.

AHS Vision

Vermonters are healthy, safe and achieve their greatest potential for well-being and personal independence in healthy, safe and supportive communities.

AHS Mission

AHS works as one agency, in partnership with communities, to provide effective services that are delivered respectfully, easy to access, well-coordinated, and aimed at promoting well-being and intervening before crisis.

Role of the Field Services Division

The Field Services Division is responsible for providing the leadership necessary to transform the Agency of Human Services and is responsible for the overall effectiveness of the Agency of Human Services.

State Outcomes

In 1998, the Vermont legislature established language in Title 3, VSA, section 3026 to require the Secretary of Human Services, the Commissioner of Education, and the President of the University of Vermont to study and make recommendations for improving effectiveness of state services in achieving 10- outcomes of well-being:

- * Families, youth and individuals are engaged in their community's decisions and activities**
- * Pregnant women and young children thrive**
- * Children are ready for school**
- * Children succeed in school**
- * Children live in stable, supported families**
- * Youth choose healthy behaviors**
- * Youth successfully transition to adulthood**
- * Adults lead healthy and productive lives**
- * Elders and people with disabilities live with dignity and independence in settings they prefer**
- * Communities provide safety and support to families and individuals**

Four Key Practices of Human Services

Revised December 1, 2005

Customer Service... *doesn't stop at rules and regulations.*

- **Individuals:** We look beyond service program eligibility to find ways to support individuals and families. People served feel listened to and understood, feel that we are trying to respond to their need, and receive respectful and clear answers.
- **Workforce:** Staff feel listened to and respected, supported in their efforts to be creative and flexible in finding solutions, and are routinely asked to provide ideas for system and service improvements.
- **Service System:** Human service policy and practices encourage deep listening, flexibility, creativity, and respect in all aspects of the work.

Holistic Service... *is about looking past discrete individual needs to the whole person.*

- **Individuals:** We consider the whole context of people's lives beyond the boundaries of a particular program.
- **Workforce:** Mutual respect, teamwork and cooperation are the norm, staff get the support they need to work holistically with people receiving their services, staff receive the resources that they identify they need to be effective, and they are supported during life events or transitions.
- **Service System:** Human service policy forges connections among programs and the natural supports in the community, and promotes crisis prevention and support during people's transitions.

Strength-Based Relationships... *are more effective than talking about what's wrong with someone.*

- **Individuals:** We identify and build on the assets and strengths of individuals and families.
- **Workforce:** We value the skills and expertise of our staff, routinely recognize and reward positive practices, and provide opportunities to learn and grow professionally.
- **Service System:** Human service policy reinforces and rewards strength-based practices among AHS staff and community partners with individuals and families receiving services.

Results Oriented... *means more than how much we did and how well we did it, it's about people's lives being better.*

- **Individuals:** We look for opportunities to offer prevention and early interventions that support healthy individuals and families. We commit to helping one another make gains in our lives.
- **Workforce:** We have a work environment that thrives on continuous improvement in the workplace and in service delivery, encourages professional growth and the development of promising and best practices, and acknowledges the valuable contributions of staff in improving the lives of Vermonters.
- **Service System:** Human service efforts are focused on the results that relate to the health and well-being of communities. Policy, evaluation, and decision-making reinforce a focus on achieving results, rather than delivering units of service.

Individual & Family Support Principles

WHEN WE ENGAGE WITH INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES, WE WILL...

- ❖ **HONOR THEIR EXPERTISE** and right to make choices that they know to be in their own best interest;
- ❖ **RESPECT & ACCEPT THEIR VALUES** that are based in personal preferences, cultural beliefs & life-ways;
- ❖ **SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS** that are safe, stable & long lasting;
- ❖ **FOCUS ON THE ENTIRE FAMILY** as it is defined by the family;
- ❖ **PROMOTE FLEXIBLE SERVICE & FUNDING** supporting individual & family control over who, what, when, where & how supports are provided
- ❖ **AFFIRM LIFESPAN PLANNING & SELF-DETERMINATION** that encourages decision-making & planning for independence beginning within the family when children are young, following the individual throughout their life & including aging issues
- ❖ **ASSURE PARTNERSHIPS WHICH ACTIVELY INCLUDE INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES** in planning, development, implementation & evaluation of policies, practices & personal programs
- ❖ **PRACTICE OPEN COMMUNICATION** promoting a clear understanding of all aspects of systems policy, procedure, practice & all other information regarding them;
- ❖ **RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMUNITY**, where individuals & their families belong & realize their full potential

(These principles are listed on the website for the National Center for Family Support at the Human Services Research Institute as model principles for national use. They were developed by the Oklahoma Family Council based on the University of Vermont curriculum for New Approaches to Family Support. The Special Education Dept of the University of Vermont adopted these principles for all of their coursework.)

Collaboration with Key Partners	Timeframe	Lead
<p><u>Preferred Future:</u> AHS cannot be successful in achieving its vision, mission or desired outcomes unless we “develop and utilize strong partnerships with clients, communities, schools, and service providers” (Act 45). We want a future where there is meaningful input and shared roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders: individuals and families we serve, schools, the broader community, and AHS and its contracted providers. We want an integrated service system in the Barre district that includes these stakeholders as meaningful partners. In our vision of the future, we will have deliberate, collaborative working relationships with all of our partners to successfully tackle difficult community issues that affect the well-being of our citizens.</p> <p><u>2007 Priority Actions & Steps:</u></p> <p>Convene the 5th Annual Collaboration Conference on Children, Youth & Families</p> <p>“Casey Breakthrough to Improve the Educational Stability and Outcomes for Children and Youth in Out of Home Placement”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * convene a Breakthrough team * complete self-assessment * determine areas of focus * implement & test “plan, do, study, act” <p>Support the implementation of the Children’s Integrated Services System plan</p>	<p>Conference date - October 12, 2007</p> <p>Throughout 2007</p> <p>Throughout 2007</p>	<p>Field Services & Conference Planning Committee</p> <p>DCF – Family Services & Dept of Education & Field Services</p> <p>Local Children’s Integrated Services Team</p>

<p>Increase community awareness of and decrease the rate of hunger in our community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serve as member of the local Hunger Council • implement strategies to achieve Hunger Council goals 	Throughout 2007	Central Vermont Hunger Council
<p>Increase the number of partnerships through local PINS (Partners in Need of Services), a partnership between the Agency of Human Services and local faith communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current partnerships = 19 • goal at the end of 2007 = 25 	Throughout 2007	Field Services & Hedding United Methodist Outreach Minister (local PINS coordinator)
<p>Recommend to the commissioner for the Department for Children & Families specific strategies regarding the way in which DCF contracts for services through the Family Center of Washington County</p>	July 1, 2007	DCF Contracts & Grants Pilot Project Team
<p>Create an inventory tool of all local work readiness programs designed to assist matching of transition aged youth with area employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design web based work readiness inventory • solicit employer participation to assess utility of inventory • development final plans based on feedback 	August 1, 2007	Central Vermont Work Investment Board (WIB) Youth Committee
<p>Serve in leadership role in hiring process for Building Bright Futures Regional Director and Central Vermont Community Partnership Director</p>	July 1, 2007	Building Bright Futures Council & Partnership Board

<p>Complete transformation signage at the Office of Child Support</p> <p>Increase comfort features in all Barre AHS waiting areas</p> <p>Assess the change in Family Services policy aimed at reducing the use of sheriff's transports without compromising children/youth and staff safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review first year data with Family Services • based on assessment, design strategies additional strategies/resources to achieve goals of policy <p>Design local strategies to continue to acquire consumer feedback – suggestion boxes in each waiting area for a 4 month period to determine value of this strategy</p> <p>Continue to solicit and respect consumer participation on all cross-agency initiatives</p> <p>Develop and implement a local strategy to reach all 140 AHS employees for a Beyond the Boxes facilitated discussion (as of March 1, 2007, 70 staff have participated in three sessions)</p>	July 1, 2007	Field Services & Office of Child Support
	August 1, 2007	Field Services & local PINS Coordinator
	September 1, 2007	Field Services & Family Services (DCF)
	April 1, 2007	Field Services & Barre AHS managers
	Throughout 2007	Field Services
	July 1, 2007	Field Services & Barre AHS managers

Implement a communications plan that provides local providers, partners and the general public opportunities to increase awareness of AHS services	Throughout 2007	Field Services
Establish a local methadone treatment program	July 1, 2007	Medication Assisted Treatment Team
Assess how AHS is presented in area telephone listings and offer recommendations for improvement through the deputy commissioner for field services	October 1, 2007	Field Services Specialist
Develop a local AHS map for staff and consumer use	November 1, 2007	Field Services Specialist
Design a local Field Services web site under the auspices of the state's AHS site	May 1, 2007	Field Services Specialist
Design a consumer checklist to assist field services in determining access needs	June 1, 2007	Field Services
Effective Service Coordination	Timeframe	Lead
Preferred Future: AHS is committed to serving each individual and family holistically – to not just address the most obvious issue that is being presented, but rather to provide assistance within the entire context of the person and family. Similarly, we want to make sure that when an individual or family is receiving multiple services or has multiple needs, these services are delivered in a consistent and coordinated manner.		

In our preferred future, an individual's or family's needs will be identified in a single, uniform process. Service plans will be developed with the individual/whole family at the center of the planning process, based on strengths and tailored to the uniqueness of the individual/family. When multiple services are being provided for the individual/family, there will be one integrated and coordinated service plan that incorporates all individual agency/department service plans, and that has clearly defined accountability. We have well defined guidelines around information sharing that promote service coordination and protect privacy, safety and confidentiality. We have a global view of our spending within each region across all of our services to enable better coordination of services and efficient use of our resources.

2007 Priority Actions & Steps:

Continue to develop strategies to increase the number of AHS staff utilizing the Service Coordination model

Implement the expectations outlined in the Interagency Agreement between the Dept of Education and the Agency of Human Services – as measured by the number of locally developed coordinated services plans

Complete an Interagency Team Inventory designed to add value to the work of AHS staff and our partners

Throughout 2007

July 1, 2007

May 1, 2007

**Field Services,
Barre AHS
managers & local
Service Coordinator**

**Local Interagency
Team (LIT)**

Field Services

Prevention	Timeframe	Lead
<p><u>Preferred Future:</u> Effective prevention² and early intervention³ activities promote the health and well-being of Vermonters and increase their self-reliance. Our vision is that most of our resources (financial and human) are directed towards working with individuals, families and communities <i>proactively</i> to address issues which could put people at risk of future problems, and that this has significantly reduced poverty, homelessness, hunger, chronic disease, mental health problems, substance abuse, child and elder abuse, domestic and sexual violence, other violence, crime and incarceration.</p> <p><u>2007 Priority Actions & Steps:</u></p> <p>Develop a list of strategies for possible implementation following our local AHS prevention focus group and integrate possible strategies for a soon to be written state prevention plan</p> <p>Support effective local mentoring programs as the opportunity presents itself</p> <p>Implement emergency preparedness planning requirements for staff and our community addressing all hazard possibilities</p>	<p>September 1, 2007</p> <p>Throughout 2007</p> <p>September 1, 2007</p>	<p>Barre AHS managers & Woodbury College</p> <p>Field Services</p> <p>Field Services</p>

² Efforts *focused on the general population* to create conditions and foster personal attributes that promote the well-being of people and prevent a problem before it occurs. The service or intervention is offered to everyone, regardless of risk status.

³ Efforts *focused on high risk populations* to create conditions and foster personal attributes that promote the well-being of people and prevent a problem before it occurs.

Flexible Funding to Address Gaps in Services	Timeframe	Lead
<p><u>Preferred Future:</u> We will have flexible funding to enable AHS to immediately support people in crisis and to address needs of individuals and families when traditional funding mechanisms are not yet determined or unclear. This will enable us to stabilize situations and help people avoid deeper involvement with AHS services, and achieve positive outcomes for individuals and families.</p> <p><u>2007 Priority Actions & Steps:</u></p> <p>Complete an inventory of flexible funds throughout AHS</p> <p>Objectively assess first three years of “direct service fund use” determining status of recipients based on intended expectations when “flex funds” have been awarded – make recommendations based on findings to field services deputy commissioner’s office</p>	<p>October 1, 2007</p> <p>November 1, 2007</p>	<p>Field Services Specialist</p> <p>Field Services</p>
People are Supported through Transition	Timeframe	Lead
<p><u>Preferred Future:</u> Individuals and families who are going through a time of transition from one life stage to another, or from receiving services from one program to receiving them from another, receive the necessary services and supports to make this transition successful. Examples of such times include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • during early childhood • beginning formal schooling • during reunification/adoption/moving to adulthood 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moving from family to an independent living situation • going from school to work or going back to work • leaving corrections or treatment facilities to return to the community • moving from a nursing home or supported living to a more independent setting or vice versa • following life crises, such as a death in a family, loss of a primary caregiver, or trauma • moving from victimization to safety and self-sufficiency • during the resettlement period for people who are refugees <p><u>2007 Priority Actions & Steps:</u></p> <p>Develop a strong local liaison with the Military, Family & Community Network</p> <p>Implement and assess local Deter Plan</p> <p>Continue to deliver in-prison benefits enrollment opportunities</p> <p>Implement a transitional housing strategy</p> <p>Assess our local Reach-up Redesign Plan using measurable work participation data</p>		
	July 1, 2007	Field Services & Local MFCN liaison
	By 5/1/07 & 12/1/07	Incarcerated Women's Initiative Core Team
	Throughout 2007	Local Benefits Enrollment Team
	July 1, 2007	Field Services & Continuum of Care Team
	Throughout 2007	Local Reach-up Redesign Team

<p>Complete our local assessment of procedures involving youth applying for health care when leaving foster care – make recommendations to DCF commissioner based on our local findings</p> <p>Assure a smooth transition from the local Early Childhood Council to the Regional Building Bright Futures Council</p> <p>Implement and assess the transition youth staffing model</p>	<p>June 1, 2007</p> <p>July 1, 2007</p> <p>June 1, 2007</p>	<p>Field Services, Economic Services & Family Services</p> <p>Early Childhood Council & Field Services</p> <p>Field Services & Family Services</p>
Providing Services before Crisis	Timeframe	Lead
<p><u>Preferred Future:</u> In our preferred future, individuals and families will not have to reach a stage of crises before they can access services. In fact, we will be proactively and respectfully identifying at risk youth, individuals and families and offering services and supports to prevent crises from occurring. Better access to services, creating a system that puts the individual or family at the center, a stronger focus on prevention, more effective coordination and collaboration, support during transitions, flexible funding to alleviate situations as they are occurring and before they get worse - all serve to support individuals and families before crisis rather than after. The real long-term indicator of whether all these tools are working is whether we have fewer individuals and families in crisis and needing high-end services.</p>		

<p><u>2007 Priority Actions & Steps:</u></p> <p>Review local data from our service coordination model to determine capabilities to prevent crisis</p> <p>Encourage AHS staff to continue to refer clients to our local service coordination before the advent of a crisis</p> <p>Expand our Local Interagency Team (LIT) to encourage additional local capacity to develop coordinated services plans that would reduce rate of crises</p> <p>Assess data regarding high risk unsubstantiated cases and identify strategies to successfully support families where high risk has been identified</p>	July 1, 2007	Field Services & local Service Coordination
	Throughout 2007	Field Services & Barre AHS managers
	June 1, 2007	LIT
	September 1, 2007	Family Services & Field Services

Information Systems - Communication	Timeframe	Lead
<p><u>Preferred Future:</u> AHS reorganization represents a new approach to delivering services, with an emphasis on respect and a greater sharing of information for more effective service delivery. Our preferred future includes clearly defined mechanisms that enable us to maintain the confidentiality of personal information and to share information when needed to provide coordinated, integrated and responsive services and promote the health and safety of all Vermonters. This means that we share information with the full knowledge of the individual, treats personal information with the utmost respect, and takes appropriate safeguards for privacy. It means that individuals and families understand and /or define who has access to what information about their personal situations. AHS and contracted provider staff are knowledgeable about information sharing protocols and individuals and families are confident that their privacy is being protected.</p> <p>Our preferred future also includes information technology tools to provide better access to services (the "Screen Door"); to provide easier application for benefits (Single On-line Application), and to facilitate integrated case planning (Common Case Management). We also will have an information technology tool that captures aggregate caseload, service and expenditure data across all AHS services (Coverage and Services Management Enhancements - CSME) to provide policymakers, field directors, staff and contracted providers with management and field reports regarding trends and regional distributions of caseload and service use.</p>		

<u>2007 Priority Actions & Steps:</u> Develop field services website Continue to submit bi-weekly news to deputy commissioner for field services and a list of "bi-weekly readers" Disseminate twice monthly training, professional development and learning opportunities list Disseminate "Open Lines" newsletter once a month Disseminate Staff Newsletter once a month	May 1, 2007	Field Services Specialist
	Throughout 2007	Field Services
	Throughout 2007	Field Services
	Throughout 2007	Field Services
	Throughout 2007	Field Services

Continuous Improvement & Accountability	Timeframe	Lead
<u>Preferred Future:</u> In our preferred future we are continuously improving the Agency's performance to meet the needs, wants, and expectations of Vermonters and we are held accountable for our effectiveness and efficiency. To accomplish this, we have well-packaged, widely distributed data regarding our progress on indicators related to the AHS outcomes and on measures of effectiveness for all major AHS programs and functions. We are continuously assessing and reviewing the satisfaction (and complaints) of the individuals and families we serve. AHS managers, staff and community partners use these data to improve on our work. We are making the above information routinely available to AHS, its partners and the Vermont public in a format that is simple, meaningful and useful. We also have an internal organizational culture		

that is continuously receiving and using feedback about our performance to improve our services, including conducting 360 degree evaluation processes for all managers and staff.		
<u>2007 Priority Actions & Steps:</u>		
Assess consumer and staff feedback through suggestion boxes, individual sessions, group meetings, and other means	Throughout 2007	Field Services & Barre AHS managers
Develop a communications strategy to focus on measurable data related to the 10 outcomes for well-being	September 1, 2007	Field Services

Workforce Development	Timeframe	Lead
<p><u>Preferred Future:</u> Our workforce, which includes AHS staff and the staff of our contracted partners, is central to our work. To be successful, AHS must make a long-term commitment to human resource development for our workforce and must tap into their wisdom and energy for continuous improvement in our services. In our preferred future, our workforce feels respected, supported, and valued for their skills, knowledge and practices. They have the tools needed to provide “effective services that are delivered respectfully, easy to access, well coordinated, aimed at promoting well-being and intervening before crisis.” We have a culture that encourages enthusiasm, flexibility, creativity and continuous improvement. Our workforce is supported to be involved in AHS activities that use their strengths, and we seek their on-going input about their work experiences and satisfaction and what areas need improvement.</p>		

<p><u>2007 Priority Actions & Steps:</u></p> <p>Implement a group orientation process for new Barre AHS staff</p> <p>Continue to build an annual workforce calendar addressing the broader training and professional development needs of Barre AHS staff</p> <p>Implement, with our central office matrix management partners, a performance review process for all local Barre AHS managers</p> <p>Continue to recognize staff and community partners for successful efforts</p> <p>Continue to organize an annual Barre AHS Staff Day</p> <p>Implement workforce teams on an as needed basis for time-limited projects</p> <p>Work with local Barre AHS managers to assess our local recruitment and interviewing procedures to assure that we're embracing the 4 Key Practices</p>	April 1, 2007	Field Services & Barre AHS managers
	Throughout 2007	Field Services
	July 1, 2007	Field Services Division/Policy Exec
	Throughout 2007	Field Services
	June 4, 2007	Field Services
	Throughout 2007	Field Services
	July 1, 2007	Field Services & Barre AHS managers